

Islamic Work Ethics in Thwarting Knowledge-Hiding Behavior among Organization Members

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Abstract

Knowledge-hiding (KH) behavior is of particular concern in organizational and management studies because it can reduce the flow of knowledge and information in organizations. Thus, mechanisms that can minimize this behavior need to be identified, especially from an Islamic perspective. This study seeks to explain how Islamic work ethics may decrease or thwart employees from performing KH. In particular, the current study tries to explain the dual mediation mechanism that underlies this relationship, namely organizational citizenship behavior (OCB) and organizational commitment (OC). In order to verify the hypotheses, this study collected data from employees who work at Islamic banks in Pekanbaru City, Riau, Indonesia. Partial Least Square-Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM) analysis was employed to verify the hypotheses proposed in the current study. This study revealed that Islamic work ethics can potentially limit or thwart workers from successfully performing their KH. Furthermore, this study found that organizational commitment and OCB mediate the mechanisms underlying the relationship.

Keywords: *Islam, ethics, KH, OCB, commitment, workplace.*



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INTRODUCTION

In a competitive and dynamic business, managing knowledge effectively is essential for an organization or company (Lin & Lee, 2004). The achievement of knowledge management (KM) application overhang on effective knowledge-sharing (KS) behavior among organization members (Wang & Noe, 2010). When employees in an organization have done knowledge sharing, individual work becomes easier and more efficient for more substantive tasks (Teh & Sun, 2012). Effective knowledge sharing is an important way to improve an organization's core competencies and gain a competitive edge through innovation performance (Lin & Lee, 2004; Sáenz et al., 2012; Wang & Wang, 2012; Yen et al., 2015). In this view, KS is essential for successful organizations when they want to maintain a competitive edge in their industry. However, problems arise when some employees try to hide the knowledge they have. This will cause the collaboration and internal knowledge flow of the organization to be disrupted (Peng, 2013), innovation and creativity levels to decrease (Černe et al., 2014), and organizational and interpersonal deviations to increase (Singh, 2019). Thus, scientists in the field of organizational studies call on researchers to investigate the KH behavior phenomenon (Connelly et al., 2019).

Studies that explored and explained KH behavior phenomenon in the organization are very diverse and will continue to grow (e.g., Abdillah et al., 2022; Connelly et al., 2012). Several studies have addressed the mechanisms driving by which an organization's members engage in KH behaviors (e.g., Pan et al., 2018; Boz Semerci, 2019) and the mechanisms preventing that cause a person from being reluctant to engage in such behavior (e.g., Abdillah et al., 2022). However, studies on KH behavior from the landscape of work ethics are still scarce, especially regarding Islamic work ethics (IWE). Based on the research problem, this study asks two main questions: Can IWE decrease or thwart employees from performing knowledge-hiding (KH) in the Indonesian context? If so, do organizational commitment (OC) and organizational citizenship behavior (OCB) mediate the mechanism of the process?

The current study addresses inquiries into how IWE may thwart organization members performing KH in the Indonesian context. Furthermore, the current study also investigates OCB and OC mechanisms in

the link between IWE and KH behavior. Furthermore, this research offers a potential contribution to the field of organizational and management studies, especially in Islamic management studies. Theoretically, the current study improves the comprehension of the psychological mechanisms of why IWE becomes essential to thwart KH behavior among organization members. In particular, this study proposes OCB and organizational commitment as novel relationship mechanisms in elucidating why IWE can thwart KH behavior among organization members. Empirically, this study adds to the literature that discusses counterproductive behaviors, such as the behavior of hiding knowledge in the Indonesian context, which is currently still limited (Abdillah et al., 2022; Mursita & Almilialia, 2021). In practice, this study provides managers with an overview of the essential function of the role of IWE in reducing and or preventing organization members (employees) from engaging in KH behaviors, especially in preventing the emergence of counterproductive knowledge behaviors (CKB) that can be detrimental to knowledge management in organizations.

LITERATURE REVIEW

IWE and KH Behavior

There are many conceptual definitions of knowledge, including the conceptual definition by Davenport and Prusak (1998) about knowledge. They defined knowledge as “a fluid mix of framed experience, values, contextual information, and expert insights that provides a framework for evaluating and incorporating new experiences and information” (Davenport & Prusak, 1998, p. 5). Some scholars advance their understanding of knowledge phenomena starting from such a definition, including Rhee and Choi (2017), who described knowledge as information, skills, and ideas gained from a person via mastery, education, and experience of a job related to the implementation of tasks at work. In order to understand the conceptual definition of knowledge, in the current study, we adopted definitions of knowledge from both that explain knowledge at the workplace as a fluid combination of information, skills, and ideas by a person that he/she obtained via mastery, education, and experience using by him/her in doing his/her job. Furthermore, KH behavior is one of the CKB that refers to an “...intentional attempt by an individual to withhold or conceal knowledge

that another person has requested...” (Connelly et al., 2012, p. 65). KH behavior can be detrimental to the organization because it can interfere with the effectiveness of internal information flow and the development of new ideas in an organization (Peng, 2013; Serenko & Bontis, 2016).

Philosophers and Scientists in the field of morals have long conducted studies on ethics. It aims to understand why humans act in a certain way and justify those actions with a certain intention (Murtaza et al., 2016). Ethics itself is defined as “...a set of moral principles that distinguish what is right (*ma'rūf*) from what is wrong (*munkar*)... it prescribes what one should do or abstain from doing...” (Beekun, 1997, p. 1-2). Ethics is embedded in the essence of the person's soul and is born into endeavors that are done without prior contemplation, without thought by someone, and without question (Zakiah & Al-Aidaros, 2017). From the Islamic perspective, ethics is based on the instructions given by Allah in the “Quran” and the “Sunnah of the Prophet Muhammad *Shalallahu Alaihi Wassalam*” (Yousef, 2000). IWE itself is an orientation that views work as a virtue.

IWE is established in the attitude and behavior of the Prophet Muhammad *Shalallahu Alaihi Wassalam* and Allah's guidance in the Qur'an (Khalid et al., 2018; Murtaza et al., 2016). The principles of Islam based on both sources are clear. It prohibits dishonesty and fraud in business affairs (Khalid et al., 2018). IWE also implies that ‘work is a virtue’ in line with pursuing a person's needs. However, it does not just stress individual interests but also requires persons as Muslims to pay attention to others' interests (Ali & Al-Owaihan, 2008). Building an equilibrium between one's interests and society's interests is the main aim of Islamic life principles.

Islam itself strictly does not allow its members (Muslims) to self-interest. It implies that organization members, as Muslims, prohibit hiding their knowledge and advocate for their members to share their knowledge (Khan et al., 2015). Therefore, employees who uphold the principles and values of work in Islam are required to share their knowledge and cooperate with co-workers or colleagues at the workplace. Thus, employees who uphold IWE will tend not to want to perform KH behaviors at the workplace. Based on the explanation that has been contemplated, the current study put forward a hypothesis:

Hypothesis 1 : IWE may minimize KH behavior.

In the Islamic perspective, each individual is required to practice a sense of responsibility for the love of work and volunteerism in work (Murtaza et al., 2016). An employee who loves his/her work is represented in a commitment to his organization as “an employee who has a positional psychological and emotional connection between him and his organization that makes it unlikely that the employee will voluntarily leave the organization” (Anita et al., 2020, p. 1791). Meanwhile, such voluntary behavior portrayed by OCB is an extraordinary organization member action, which is not explicitly or directly acknowledged by the individual’s formal job appraisal system. Such action is also not explicitly or directly acknowledged by the organization’s formal award system. However, OCB may build an effective organizational function, such as helping colleagues who need help in getting work done (Cooper et al., 2018).

IWE stresses mutual support and discussion among organization members (Khan et al., 2015). In the values and principles of work in Islam, a Muslim is required to be polite and cooperate with fellow creatures. In addition, IWE also emphasizes that organization members work for others’ or society’s benefit and are required to be fully responsible for the job. Islam constantly encourages its followers to be positive and act with kindness in society. In the organizational context, organization members who obey such moral principles are supposed to engage in extraordinary work action and be responsible for their work. The teachings of Prophet Muhammad *Shalallahu Alaihi Wassalam* emphasized that the best human beings are the most beneficial and beneficial to others (Murtaza et al., 2016). Based on the explanation that has been contemplated, the current study put forward a hypothesis:

Hypothesis 2a : OC mediates the link between IWE and KH behavior.

Hypothesis 2b : OCB mediates the link between IWE and KH behavior.

Hypothesis 2 : OCB and OC mediate the link between IWE and KH behavior.

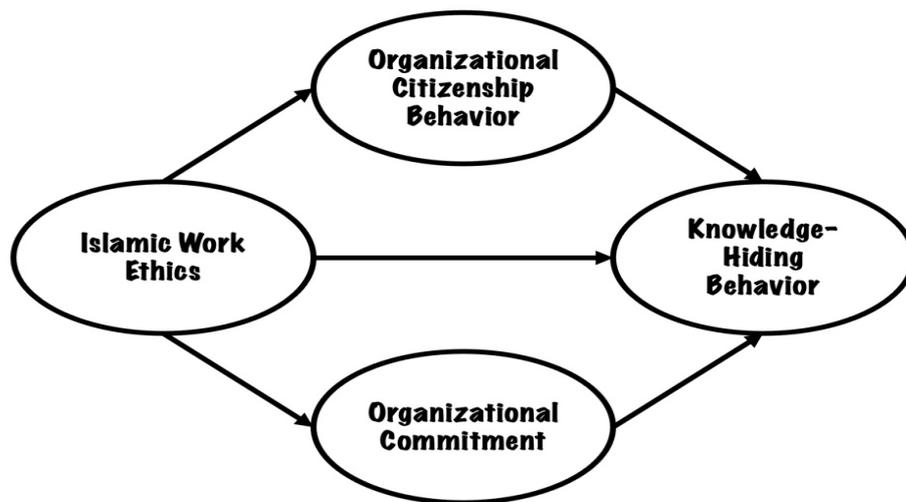


Figure 1. Theoretical Model

RESEARCH METHOD

Samples And Procedures

The current study used primary data to test hypotheses. This study distributed questionnaires to 250 employees working at Sharia Banks in Kota Pekanbaru, Riau, using a self-administered questionnaire (Bourque & Fielder, 2003). The distribution of questionnaires will be carried out by social networking and snowballing sampling methods (Fink, 2003). Out of the 250 questionnaires distributed, only 125 returned. Of the overall questionnaires returned, only 122 questionnaires were completed by respondents.

Measures

In this study, IWE was adapted from Ali's (1992) 17-item "Islamic work ethics scale." The sample items are "laziness is a vice," "dedication to work is a virtue," "good work benefits both one's self and others," "more leisure time is good for society" (reverse code), and "the value of work is delivered from the accompanying intention rather than its result." Alternative answers were using a 7-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 7 (strongly agree).

OCB was measured from a 4-item scale adapted from Teh and Sun (2012). The sample items are “I help others who have been absent,” “I help others who have heavy workloads” and “I take a time to lesson to co-worker problems and worries.” Alternative answers were using a 7-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 7 (strongly agree).

In the current study, OC was measured via Mowday *et al.* (1979) 9-item scale. Samples of items are “I am willing to put in a great deal of effort beyond that normally expected in order to help this organization be successful,” “I am proud to tell others that I am a part of this organization,” and “I found that my values and the organization’s value are similar.” Alternative answers were using a 7-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 7 (strongly agree).

KH was measured via a 4-item scale adapted from Rhee and Choi (2017). The sample items are “I said that I did not know even though I did” and “I agreed to help him/her but never really intended to.” Alternative answers were using a 7-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 7 (strongly agree).

Data Analysis

In organizational study, to ensure the accuracy of construct measurement, data analysis, and data interpretation, the concepts discussed in the study/research must match the empirical level of analysis (Neuman, 2014, 2017). The current study focused on the micro-level (individual level of analysis) to measure organization member perceptions. The hypotheses of our study were verified using SEM-PLS analysis via WarpPLS 5.0 software. The analysis was done in several steps. *First*, measurement model evaluation was done by testing the variables items scale (Chin, 2010). It was evaluated by discriminant and convergent validity tests and reliability tests (Hair *et al.*, 2014). *Second*, the current study analyzes structural models aimed at testing all of the hypotheses that have been proposed.

SEM-PLS analysis has an advantage: the accuracy in analyzing structural models with small or limited sample sizes (Sholihin & Ratmono, 2013). The current study has a limited sample size. Hence, utilizing such analysis, the current study “can achieve a fairly high statistical power” (Sholihin & Ratmono, 2013, p. 11). In addition, when the sample size is

large, such analysis “can improve the accuracy and consistency of the SEM-PLS estimation results” (Sholihin & Ratmono, 2013, p. 11). Based on such assumption, the current study that collected more than 100 respondents adequately used SEM-PLS analysis.

RESULTS

Measurement Model

Measurement model evaluation was done to verify the reliability and validity of the instrumentation of each construct (Hair et al., 2014). It provides an evaluation of how accurate (e.g., reliable) a measuring instrument is, as well as whether the scale of the items for each variable is valid in terms of discriminant and convergent (Chin, 2010). The first stage in the measurement analysis is to evaluate the composite reliability (CR) of each research construct (IWE, OCB, OC, KH behavior). It is evaluated to measure ‘internal reliability consistency’ for each construct (Hair et al., 2014). Table 1 shows the reliability composite scores for all variables in the study ≥ 0.70 . Such findings demonstrate that all variables, including IWE, OCB, OC, and KH behavior, have statistically acceptable reliability (Chin, 2010).

Table 1. Correlation, Convergent Validity, and Reliability

Variable	C.R.	AVE	Correlation			
			IWE	OC	OCB	KH Behavior
IWE	0.969	0.651	(0.807)			
OC	0.969	0.777	0.649***	(0.881)		
OCB	0.971	0.892	0.790***	0.668***	(0.944)	
KH Behavior	0.957	0.817	-0.623***	-0.596***	-0.756***	(0.904)

Note: The diagonal element is the square root of the AVE statistic. Furthermore, the diagonal element is compared with the correlation between the latent variables calculated in PLS

***Significant at p-level < 0.01.

The next stage in the measurement analysis is to evaluate the construct validity of the scale of the items for each construct. The construct validity was evaluated with discriminant and convergent validities (Hair et al., 2012).

The discriminant validity of the items for each construct was evaluated through a comparison between the AVE square root and the correlation between constructs within the theoretical model. The evaluation was done to compare “...the square root of the average variance extracted (AVE) with the correlations among constructs...” (Chin, 2010, p. 671). It was evaluated by “...the square root value of AVE should be higher than the highest correlation with any other construct...” in a research model (Hair et al., 2014, p. 112). Table 1 shows that scores of the AVE square root for each construct are higher than the correlation scores between constructs. It expresses that all items for each construct have statistically acceptable discriminant validity.

Furthermore, in addition to measuring the validity of discriminants, it is also necessary to measure the convergent validity for each research construct. Ideally, “...AVE should be greater than 0.50, meaning that 50% or more variance of the indicators should be accounted for...” (Chin, 2010, p. 671). Table 1 reveals that the AVE scores for all variables consisting of IWE, OCB, OC, and KH behavior are greater than or equal to 0.50. It suggests that all items for each construct gauge in this study are convergently valid. Based on the findings that have been explained above, it concludes that these findings in measurement model evaluation have filled requirements assumptions in discriminant and convergent validity tests, as well as reliability tests (Hair et al., 2014).

Structural Model

As explained above, the structural model evaluation aims to verify all hypotheses that have been proposed in the theoretical model. The current study empirically addresses a theoretical model investigating how and why IWE may thwart organization members performing KH in the Indonesian context via OCB and OC mechanisms. The findings from the structural model analysis can be exhibited in Table 2. The table (Model 1) exhibits that IWE directly without mediating variables negatively affects KH behavior ($\beta = -0.630, p < 0.01$). This finding empirically supports the first hypothesis (H_1), which argues that IWE may minimize KH behavior.

Table 2. PLS Results.

Model 1. Direct influence without mediating variables		<i>Coefficient</i>
<i>Influence</i>		
IWE à KH behavior		-0.630
<i>R-squared</i>		
KH behavior		0.397
Model 2. Models with mediation variables		<i>Coefficient</i>
<i>Influence</i>		
IWE à Knowledge hiding behavior		-0.030 ^{n.s.}
IWE à Organizational commitment		0.659 ^{***}
OC à KH behavior		-0.208 ^{***}
IWE à OCB		0.790 ^{***}
OCB à KH		-0.593 ^{***}
IWE à OC à KH behavior		-0.137 ^{***}
IWE à OCB à KH behavior		-0.468 ^{***}
<i>Total indirect influence</i>		
IWE à KH behavior		-0.605 ^{***}
<i>Total influence</i>		
IWE à KH behavior		-0.635 ^{***}
<i>R-squared</i>		
OC		0.434
OCB		0.624
KH behavior		0.599

*** = significant at < level 0.01

n.s. = insignificant

The findings that exhibit that IWE directly affects KH behavior among organization members reveal the prominent role of IWE in minimizing KH behavior as predicted in Hypothesis 1. The current study also expands the explanation of function from IWE by advanced inquiry indirect effect of IWE function. Investigating the indirect effect can portray the essential role

of IWE function on OCB and OC, ultimately affecting reduced KH behavior among organization members.

The hypothesis 2a (H_{2a}) in the study is statistically verified (see Model 2). Table 2 shows that IWE positively affects OC ($\beta = 0.659, p < 0.01$) and OC negatively affects KH behavior ($\beta = -0.208, p < 0.01$). The table also shows that, statistically, OC mediates the influence of IWE on KH behavior ($\beta = -0.137, p < 0.01$). This finding empirically supports hypothesis 2a (H_{2a}) which argues that OC mediates the link between IWE and KH behavior.

Furthermore, the hypothesis 2b (H_{2b}) in the study is also statistically verified (see Model 2). Table 2 also shows that IWE positively affects OCB ($\beta = 0.790, p < 0.01$) and OCB negatively affects KH behavior ($\beta = -0.593, p < 0.01$). The table also shows that, statistically, OCB mediates the influence of IWE on KH behavior ($\beta = -0.468, p < 0.01$). This finding empirically supports hypothesis 2a (H_{2a}) which argues that OC mediates the link between IWE and KH behavior.

Next, table 2 exhibits the findings of the total indirect effect of IWE on KH behavior via OCB and OC. The findings reveal that the effect was empirically supported ($\beta = -0.605, p < 0.01$). Based on this finding, it can be portrayed that the second hypothesis (H_2), which argues that OCB and OC mediate the link between IWE and KH behavior, is statistically confirmed. It explains that IWE can thwart organization members from performing KH behavior via OCB and OC mechanisms.

DISCUSSION

Theoretical Implications

Current studies have a unique and meaningful contribution to understanding the mechanisms for preventing KH behavior among organization members through IWE. The study in this study seeks to explain the mechanism of the relationship between IWE and KH behavior both directly and indirectly. The results of the first hypothesis test explain that employees with a strong IWE tend not to perform to hide their knowledge. Organization members who follow ethical principles based on the “Quran” and “Sunnah” tend to be reluctant to engage in performing KH behavior towards their co-workers because Islam always encourages every Muslim to share knowledge with those who do not or do not know such knowledge.

In other words, the values and ethics of work in Islam require organization members not to hide their knowledge.

The results of the second hypothesis, which has been examined, demonstrate that OCB and OC serve as mediators for the psychological processes that explain the relationship between IWE and KH behavior. The findings on the first mediation path explain that employees with strong IWE tend to have a high commitment to their organization (OC). These results explain that employees who follow work principles based on the “Quran” and “Sunnah” (such as respecting fellow human beings, working hard, being fair, and being generous) tend to have a strong OC. The findings of the current study confirm previous studies (Nasution & Rafiki, 2020) that also exhibited similar results to our finding, which explains that employees who follow Islamic principles and values when they work at the workplace might have a stronger OC.

Furthermore, organization members who have a strong commitment to their organization tend to be reluctant to perform KH behavior. Conversely, those who have a low commitment to their organization tend to perform KH behavior at the workplace. This finding clarifies that organization members with a strong IWE indirectly prefer not to perform in KH behavior because they have a strong commitment to their organization. Those who hold the values and principles of work ethics in Islam tend to have a strong commitment to their organization that will ultimately prevent them from engaging in CKB, such as KH behavior.

Furthermore, the findings on the second mediation path explain that organization members with strong IWE tend to have OCB. In contrast, those with weak IWE have low OCB scores, represented by the reluctance to help their co-workers. The findings of the current study are in line with prior empirical evidence (Murtaza et al., 2016) which explains that organization members with a strong IWE tend to have extraordinary behaviors, such as helping their colleagues. Organization members who have a high OCB score may eventually cause them to be reluctant to perform in KH behaviors. Conversely, those who are reluctant to perform in the behavior of helping colleagues (OCB) tend to engage in KH behaviors. These findings are in line with prior empirical evidence (Jo & Joo, 2011; Ramasamy & Thamaraiselvan, 2011; Teh & Sun, 2012), which explained that organization members who have high OCB scores tend to engage in KS behaviors compared to those with

low OCB scores. These results explain that those who have strong Islamic principles and values when they work at the workplace indirectly prefer not to engage in KH behaviors because they have extraordinary behavior at the workplace, such as OCB. These results make it clear that organization members who adhere to the principles of work in Islam based on the “Quran” and “Sunnah” tend to like to help their colleagues in need voluntarily. Working principles in Islam tend to guide them to engage in OCB behavior, which may ultimately prevent them from engaging in KH behavior.

Managerial Implications

The current study findings have implications for managers working in Islamic banking institutions in understanding a comprehensive model that explains the mechanisms for preventing KH behavior through IWE. The findings provide meaningful insight into the essential function of IWE to thwart organization members from performing KB behaviors through two-channel mechanisms, such as OCB and OC. IWE also has a strong influence on the ethical values that guide the actions of organization members (Khan et al., 2015). Thus, managers must consider a code of ethics rooted in learning the principles of Islamic work derived from the “Quran” and “Sunnah” (Murtaza et al., 2016). Training and development programs are needed to create strong values and principles of Islamic work in the organization to realize such a strategy.

CONCLUSION

The current study addresses the inquiry of a theoretical model that explains how Islamic work ethics can thwart KH behavior among organization members via OCB and OC mechanisms. The findings directly exhibit that IWE, without mediating variables, negatively affects KH behavior. The findings of the direct influence of IWE on organization members’ KH behavior reveal an essential function of IWE in thwarting KH behavior at the workplace. The current study further elucidates the concept of IWE by providing an explanation of its indirect effects. Indirect influences can reflect the impact of IWE on OCB and OC, ultimately affecting reduced KH behavior at the workplace. Furthermore, the findings also exhibit that IWE positively affects OC and OC negatively affects KH behavior among organization members. In addition, the empirical evidence shows that IWE positively affects OCB, and OCB negatively affects

KH behavior in the workplace. Such findings portray that the commitment of the organization and the OCB mediates the mechanism of the process underlying the link between IWE and KH behavior.

LIMITATION

The current study has several weaknesses or shortcomings that must be outlined. *First*, this study only used a sample of 122, so generalizing the results regarding the built theoretical model is still needed in subsequent studies. *Second*, this study only used a sample selected from employees who worked at Islamic banking organizations in Pekanbaru City. Thus, the study findings may not be generalized to other sectors, especially in other regions. Further studies are required to confirm the theoretical model built on our study, especially in the industrial sector and other sub-cultures in Indonesia. *Third*, this study only investigates one factor in explaining efforts to prevent KH behavior: the function of IWE. Thus, further research is needed to investigate other factors, such as Islamic human resource management practices (Kim & Ko, 2014), innovation capabilities (Akhavan & Mahdi Hosseini, 2016), and leadership styles (e.g., Islamic leadership).

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